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FOR STATE TELLO WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JAPAN EFFECTIVELY LOBBYING ON WHALING

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. George Novey, Sub-Administrator of the GOP's Aquatic Resources Authority (ARAP), told EconOff that he and Richard Pretto Malca, the ARAP Administrator, agree with the Government of Japan's request that the GOP abstain from voting during the May 2007 International Whaling Convention (IWC). Novey added, however, that Ruben Arosemena, Second Vice President and Administrator of the GOP's Maritime Authority, believes the GOP is bound by international agreement to support the continued whaling ban. Separately, Yuichi Fukuda, the Second Secretary at the Japanese Embassy in Panama told EconOff that the GOJ has to be careful in its lobbying on whaling issues so not to affect other GOP-GOJ issues. END SUMMARY.

GOP Internally Divided on Whaling

¶2. (SBU) On March 5, 2007, EconOff and Econ Specialist met with Novey to discuss issues related to the TEDs inspection and the licensing of a marine mammal exhibit known as Ocean Embassy. When discussing environmentalist reactions to the marine mammal exhibit, Novey said it was similar to the issue of whaling and the capture of marine mammals for scientific purposes. Novey told EconOff that the ARAP is subject to regular lobbying by the GOJ to abstain from voting during the May 2007 IWC in Anchorage, Alaska.

¶3. (SBU) Novey said that he and the ARAP Administrator believe the GoP should abstain because whaling is not an issue directly affecting Panama. Novey added, however, that Arosemena believes the GOP is bound by international agreement to support the continued whaling ban whaling in its present form. Novey said the GOP would vote with the USG during the IWC and the instructions from Arosemena to date are to continue to support the whaling ban.

Japanese Embassy Keen to Avoid Dispute on Whaling

¶4. (U) In a separate meeting on March 5, 2007, Fukuda told EconOff that the GOJ viewed favorably the marine mammal exhibit and that the issues involved were similar to those involving whaling (i.e., the capture of dolphins and whales for scientific purposes). Fukuda said the GOJ will lobby the GOP to abstain from voting during the next IWC. Fukuda said that the concern for the GOJ was to not push the issue so strongly that it would affect other GOP-GOJ issues. Fukuda said he believed the USG had a double standard on whaling given the exemption given to Eskimos to conduct traditional

whaling hunts. EconOff reminded Fukuda of the USG position and that while the USG and GOJ may disagree on this issue, the USG and GOJ in Panama need to focus on issues of mutual concern and interest. Fukuda said the GOJ does not want the whaling issue to become a public dispute in Panama between the GOJ and the USG.

15. (U) COMMENT. While the GOP can be counted on the continue to vote with the USG on whaling matters as of now, Novey's comment demonstrates that the GOJ efforts to garner support on whaling issues are making inroads in the GOP. Post will continue to track the GOP's posture to ensure they do not waver at the upcoming IWC meeting.
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